

Message Text

PAGE 01 BANGKO 00787 151339Z

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ACTION SS-30

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CINCPAC

DIA

S E C R E T BANGKOK 0787

EXDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MASS, TH

SUBJECT: PROPOSED MISSION RESPONSE TO THAI INSURGENCY

REF: A) BANGKOK 0235 B) BANGKOK 0781

1. THE THAI COMMUNIST INSURGENCY--NOW INVOLVING ROUGHLY 6800 TO 7000 ARMED MEN--CONTINUES TO GROW 10 TO 20 PERCENT *ANNUALLY. MAIN AREAS OF RECENT EXPANSION HAVE BEEN IN THE NORTHEAST. TO DATE THE RATE OF EXPANSION HAS BEEN *LIMITED* BY RELATIVE SCARCITY OF THAI CADRE FOR VILLAGE-LEVEL ORGANIZATION BUILDING; BUT AS MORE CADRE ARE RECRUITED AND TRAINED FROM EXPANSION AREAS, THE RATE OF GROWTH COULD POSSIBLY DOUBLE IN THE NEXT THREE OR FOUR YEARS. SIGNIFICANTLY, HANOI'S TRAINING AND LOGISTICS SUPPORT TO THE INSURGENCY APPARENTLY INCREASED CONSIDERABLY IN 1973, WHILE CHINESE SUPPORT CONTINUED.

2. RTG COUNTERINSURGENCY (CI) EFFORTS, WHICH SUFFER FROM TOP LEADERS' INATTENTION, HAVE NOT BEEN ADEQUATE TO CURB THE EXPANSION

SECRET

PAGE 02 BANGKO 00787 151339Z

OF THE INSURGENCY. AS A RESULT OF PERSISTING LACK OF TOP-LEVEL CONCERN AND EMPHASIS, RTG CI PLANS LAG BEHIND DEVELOPMENTS AND FIELD OPERATIONS ARE INADEQUATE. THE RTG'S BASIC CONTAINMENT STRATEGY IN PRACTICE HAS NOT YET COME TO BEAR EFFECTIVELY ON THE

INSURGENCY AT VILLAGE LEVEL, EXCEPT IN AREAS OF THE SOUTH WHERE RTG CI EFFORTS CATALYZED BY MG SANT CHITPATIMA (RTA COMMANDER IN SOUT) HAVE MADE SOME INROADS ON SEVERAL OLD INSURGENT STRONGHOLD AREAS. AN IMPROVED RTG LOCAL SECURITY SYSTEM BASED ON AN EXPANSION OF THE OLD VOLUNTEER DEFENSE CORPS SHOWS SOME REAL POTENTIAL FOR PROVIDING BETTER VILLAGE SECURITY BUT IS ONLY THIS YEAR BEING IMPLEMENTED ON A TRIAL BASIS IN SELECTED AREAS.

3. THERE ARE SIGNS THAT THE PRESENT SANYA GOVERNMENT AND ITS IMMEDIATE SUCCESSOR MAY DEVOTE EVEN LESS ATTENTION TO THE INSURGENCY THAN DID THANOM AND PRAPHAT. INCREASING FINANCIAL AND POLITICAL PRESSURES MAY MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO ORDER EFFECTIVE CI OPERATIONS. THE FUTURE OF CSOC ITSELF IS CURRENTLY BEING DEBATED WITHIN THE RTG.

4. FOR THE PAST NINE YEARS THE US HAS ASSISTED THE RTG EFFORT. WE HAVE GIVEN THE THAI TRAINING AND TOOLS TO DEAL WITH THE COMMUNISTS, BUT HAVE NOT GIVEN (AND PROBABLY COULD NOT GIVE) THE THAI LEADERS THE DETERMINATION TO COPE EFFECTIVELY WITH THE THREAT.

5. THE US-THAI RELATIONSHIP ON CI MATTERS HAS CHANGED QUICKLY IN THE PAST TWO YEARS. THE THAI HAVE DEMONSTRATED THEIR INDEPENDENCE IN CI MATTERS AND HAVE NOT CONSULTED US ABOUT MOST OF THEIR NEW CI INITIATIVES. SOME SENIOR THAI ARE NOT CONVINCED, IN LIGHT OF OUR VIETNAM EXPERIENCE, THAT WE HAVE MUCH USEFUL CI ADVICE TO OFFER THAILAND. AS US ASSISTANCE DECLINES, RTG CI INDEPENDENCE IS MORE MANIFEST.

6. IN MY VIEW, US ASSISTANCE TO THE THAI CI EFFORT HAS BEEN FLAWED BY THE PERSISTENT BELIEF AMONG SOME THAI LEADERS THAT WE REGARDED THE ENDEAVOR AS OF GREATER*IMPORTANCE THAN THEY DID. OUTM OF THIS FAULTY PERCEPTION EMERGED SUCH BLUNDERS AS THE FAKE LETTER. I DO NOT REGARD THE THAI INSURGENCY AS A SERIOUS THREAT TO US INTERESTS IN THAILAND FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS. IF IT SHOULD BECOME A SERIOUS THREAT TO STABILITY IN THAILAND SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE, OUR INTERESTS AT THAT TIME MAY NO LONGER BE WHAT THEY ARE TODAY. FOR THIS REASON, I FEEL THAT WE CAN BE QUITE WILLING
SECRET

PAGE 03 BANGKO 00787 151339Z

TO REDUCE OUR ASSISTANCE TO THE RTG CI PROGRAM IF WE FIND THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT PREPARED TO UNDERTAKE A REALLY SERIOUS EFFORT.

7. IN AN ATTEMPT TO PROBE THE RTG VIEWS AND INTENTIONS REGARDING THE INSURGENCY, I PLAN IN SUCCEEDING WEEKS TO PUT THE PROBLEM FRANKLY TO KEY MEMBERS OF THE LEADERSHIP. I HAVE ALREADY CALLED ON LTG SAIYUD KERDPHOL (REFTEL A) AND ON DEFENSE MINISTER DAWEE CHULLAWAPYA (REFTEL B) PROPOSING A JOINT REVIEW OF THE INSURGENCY. PREDICTABLY, SAIYUD APPEARED RECEPTIVE WHILE DAWEE SHOWED NO GREAT ENTHUSIASM. IT IS MY HOPE THAT PUTTING THE ISSUE UP TO THE RTG IN THESE TERMS WILL FORCE THE TOP LEADERSHIP TO FOCUS ON THE PROBLEM AND MAKE THE DECISIONS WHICH MUST BE MADE TO COMBAT IT

EFFECTIVELY. IF THEY CANNOT OR WILL NO* DO THIS, SOME ASPECTS OF
OUR ASSISTANCE TO THEIR CI EFFORTS MUST BE RECONSIDERED.

8. WHEN, AS A RESULT OF THESE DISCUSSIONS WITH THE LEADERSHIP, *
CAN COME TO A DEFINITE CONCLUSION CONCERNING THE FUTURE TRENDS OF
THE THAI COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORT, I SHALL SUBMIT SPECIFIC
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGES, IF NEEDED, IN OUR OWN CI CONTRIBUTION.

9. AIRGRAM FOLLOWS.

KINTNER

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